

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the very thorough consideration given the present application.

Claims 7, 9, 13-17 and 19-23 are now present in this application. Claims 7, 9, 13 and 19 are independent. Claims 1-6, 8, 10-12, 18 and 24-28 are canceled without prejudice to presenting them in a continuing application. Claims 7, 9 13 and 19 are amended. No new matter is involved.

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Priority Under 35 U.S.C. § 119

The Examiner has not acknowledged Applicants' claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119, and receipt of the certified priority documents. Acknowledgment thereof by the Examiner in the next Office Action is respectfully requested.

Information Disclosure Citation

Applicants thank the Examiner for considering the references supplied with the Information Disclosure Statement filed March 23, 2004, and for providing Applicants with an initialed copy of the PTO-1449 form filed therewith.

Election of Species Requirement

The Examiner has made the Election of Species Requirement final, and has withdrawn claims 5, 10-12, 25, 27 and 28 from further consideration. Applicants have canceled these non-elected without prejudice to presenting them in a continuing, e.g., divisional, patent application.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that claims 7, 9, 13-17 and 19-23 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the early indication of allowable subject matter in this application. Claims 7, 9, 13 and 19 have been rewritten in independent form. Claims 14-17 depend from claim 13 and claims 20-23 depend from claim 19. Accordingly, it is believed that this Amendment places claims 7, 9, 13-17 and 19-23 in condition for allowance.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-4, 6, 8, 18, 24 and 26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,286,324 to Pastryk et al. ("Pastryk") in view of U.S. Patent 4,706,465 to Searl. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Applicants respectfully note that this rejection is moot because claims 1-4, 6, 7, 18, 24 and 26 have been canceled.

Additional Cited References

Because the remaining references cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but have merely been cited to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

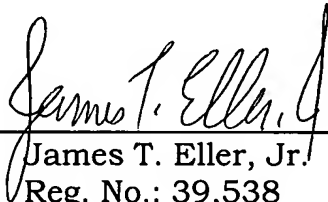
If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone Robert J. Webster, Registration No. 46,472, at (703) 205-8076, in the Washington, D.C. area.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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